United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

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Chapter I
Introduction

1. As I reflect on the work of the Organization since I took office almost two years ago, I have seen yet again that one of the most valuable assets of the United Nations is its capacity to operate as a convener of people, a proponent of ideas, a catalyst for action and a driver of solutions. As today's problems grow ever more global, multilateralism is more important than ever.

2. The Charter of the United Nations provides a moral compass to promote peace, advance human dignity and prosperity and uphold human rights and the rule of law. The narrative of each section of this report highlights key developments and trends as the Organization worked to advance those objectives over the past year.

A frank, realistic appraisal is essential

3. I started my tenure calling for 2017 to be a year of peace, yet peace remains elusive. Conflicts have deepened, with grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law; inequality has risen, intolerance has spread, discrimination against women remains entrenched and the impacts of climate change continue to accelerate. To address these issues, we need unity and courage in setting the world on track towards a better future. One of my goals as Secretary-General is to ease and end suffering while laying the foundation for stability. I have worked to exercise my good offices, bolster our capacity for mediation and emphasize prevention. We have also embarked on wide-ranging reform efforts to make the Organization fit for the twenty-first century.

Confronting global challenges

4. Upon taking office, I identified a number of challenges we must address in order to fulfil the vision of the Charter. In some areas we have made progress, but elsewhere complex crises continue to elude solution.

5. Globalization has taken root, generating remarkable gains, yet too many people are unable to share in these benefits, and millions continue to live in extreme poverty. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — an integrated and universal framework — is our contribution to a fair globalization that leaves no one behind. The launch of the Sustainable Development Goals has generated coordinated efforts by Member States and civil society to alleviate poverty and build peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies. Reform of the United Nations development system — the most comprehensive effort in decades — aims to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to support Member States in pursuit of the Goals.

6. Gender equality is central to leaving no one behind, but progress is generally slow and some parts of the world are moving backwards on legal protections and rights. The global gender pay gap is 23 per cent — underscoring persistent inequalities. Women make up more than half the world's population and all of us lose when this vast wealth of skills is underutilized or ignored.

7. The United Nations must be at the forefront of efforts to empower the world's women and girls. This year we reached two historic firsts: gender parity in both my Senior Management Group and among resident coordinators, our top leaders for sustainable development on the ground. All reform efforts are designed to advance gender equality for a simple reason: empowering women empowers us all.

8. I continue to prioritize the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse, and appointed a Victims' Rights Advocate to place rights and dignity at the centre of our

prevention and response efforts. We are also taking unprecedented action to prevent sexual harassment and ensure zero tolerance.

9. In the Secretariat, I have created a specialized team within the Office of Internal Oversight Services — adding six new dedicated posts — which will take charge of all sexual harassment investigations. We have fast-tracked and streamlined procedures to receive, process and address complaints on sexual harassment with a three-month target for completion.

10. A new 24-hour Secretariat hotline allows staff to confidentially report situations of sexual harassment and to seek advice. A Secretariat staff survey will be undertaken to enhance understanding of the scale and nature of the problem.

11. System-wide, we have launched a screening database to ensure that confirmed perpetrators cannot be rehired by another entity of the United Nations. We are also harmonizing policies and principles and sharing best practices.

12. New frontiers of technology are expanding. Artificial intelligence, genetic engineering and advances in cyberspace continue to transform the way we live and work. Our challenge is to reap the benefits of these rapidly developing technologies while protecting against unintended consequences and the dark side of technological advances. I have established a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation that will focus on this effort.

13. The impacts of climate change are being felt throughout the world and remain an existential threat. Scientists have long confirmed that human influence on the climate ecosystem is beyond doubt — and its effects are worsening. Rising sea levels threaten coastal cities, low-lying island nations and vulnerable deltas. In the Arctic, summer could well become ice-free, with devastating repercussions for indigenous peoples and sea life. We must increase ambition to bend the emission curve by 2020. Currently, however, climate change is moving faster than we are.

14. The Paris Agreement on climate change is an important expression of collective commitment to limit the rise in global temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees. As at 20 July 2018, 179 parties, representing some 90 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, have ratified the Agreement. Countries need to turn pledges into national climate action, however. Cities, regions, territories and private entities are contributing by setting their own ambitious targets. To build on this momentum, I plan to hold a summit in 2019.

15. Human mobility has reached record levels, leading to political tensions, human tragedies and an increase in xenophobia. The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees will be crucial to promoting greater international cooperation to ensure the dignity and security of people on the move.

16. The threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction has re-emerged. While nuclear tensions may have lessened with respect to the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the continuing existence of nuclear weapons remains a concern, as does the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We need to reinvigorate disarmament — from small arms to nerve agents and new technology weapons. In May 2018 I launched a disarmament agenda aimed at saving lives and ensuring a safer world for future generations. Our toolbox contains many instruments: arms control, non-proliferation, prohibitions, restrictions, confidence-building measures and even elimination when called for. Upholding the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is paramount, along with the renewal of talks to reduce and eliminate these dangerous weapons. Disarmament is pivotal to preserving human security through the prevention of conflict and the reduction of violence.

17. United Nations peacekeeping missions are increasingly deployed in volatile situations where there is no semblance of peace and our troops are being targeted and killed. While peacekeeping operations have a long history of securing peace and protecting civilians, the situation is unsustainable. This is why I have launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative to renew and upgrade our collective support for peacekeeping. Across the areas of politics, peacebuilding, performance and partnerships, the initiative aims to define and implement a set of concrete mutual commitments for the Secretariat and Member States that will enable peacekeeping to build on the gains made over 70 years and ensure their capacity to meet today's increasingly complex challenges.

18. Upholding human rights remains a global imperative and human rights and national sovereignty should not be seen as competing ideas. Observance of human rights enables every person to contribute to society and strengthens development in every aspect, thereby reinforcing sovereignty.

19. Multiple, interconnected flashpoints exist in a number of places where unresolved conflicts and tensions threaten security and human well-being. Across the broader Middle East: the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, which urgently calls for an agreement on a two-State solution; conflicts in Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, where devastating human suffering abounds; upheaval in Libya; and the continuing threat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) all need urgent attention. In Africa, protracted conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan challenge stability. In Europe, cold war rivalries are re-emerging and the continent faces a rising, dangerous tide of nationalism.

20. Terrorism is a worldwide scourge and requires a globally coordinated response. I convened the first-ever United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States to advance multilateral cooperation, and established within the Secretariat an Office of Counter-Terrorism to enhance our focus on this challenge.

Global challenges require global strategies

21. Global strategies include building partnerships among Member States, regional and international organizations, and civil society. United Nations partnerships not only create space for dialogue to share ideas and actions, but also promote burden-sharing where no country can go it alone. This includes strengthening our partnerships with Africa and I am a firm believer in an effective, well-funded African-led peace architecture.

22. Prevention must remain a high priority. This requires not only understanding the dynamics that lead to crises, but the will to act early even in the face of uncertainty. To assist peace efforts and prevention, a High-level Advisory Board on Mediation is in place to enlarge the pool of skilled envoys and mediators.

23. I have initiated a broad set of reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization and ensure cross-pillar communication as well as join up what have often been isolated silos. Reform of the peace and security architecture is aimed at ensuring that we are stronger in prevention, more agile in mediation, and more effective and cost-effective in peacekeeping operations. Development system reform is about becoming much more effective, well-coordinated, transparent and accountable to better assist countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sweeping management reforms underpin all these efforts.

24. The United Nations will need to continue to innovate and adapt to changing challenges. The operational strategies and initiatives I have set in motion during this

first phase of my tenure aim to set the stage for a more effective Organization in the months ahead and the longer term, even as we continue to carry out essential daily life-saving humanitarian assistance. I remain committed to working with Member States to achieve the comprehensive aspirations laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals and to uphold the values embedded in the Charter.

Highlights of the Secretary-General's main initiatives, 2017–2018

- Enhanced preventive diplomacy through the use of good offices and mediation capacity
- Established the High-level Advisory Board on Mediation
- Created an integrated prevention platform for early detection of and action on crises
- Reviewed the peace and security architecture to address fragmentation, funding and institutional challenges
- Streamlined work and budget for peacekeeping operations and began independent, strategic reviews of all peacekeeping operations
- Established the Office of Counter-Terrorism to enhance implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy
- Repositioned the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda
- Introduced a gender parity strategy for the United Nations system; reached gender parity in the 44-member Senior Management Group and among country resident coordinators
- Introduced concrete steps to end sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and establish a mechanism to protect victims
- Established a finance strategy to ensure objectives of the 2030 Agenda, including by accelerating implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda
- Mobilized political support among Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders in preparation for a climate summit in 2019
- Recalibrated the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and developed a support plan to improve coordination of initiatives in the region
- Established the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration
- Committed to coherent, integrated core partnerships, including the United Nations-World Bank Group Strategic Partnership Framework for the 2030 Agenda, the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, and the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security
- Adopted an integrated transition strategy for Haiti, working with the Government of Haiti and partners based on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the new approach to cholera

- Created a global health engagement strategy to advance universal health coverage, the response to emergency health crises, antimicrobial resistance, maternal, child and mental health
- Established the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda to support country-level implementation, advocacy, and communication by Sustainable Development Goal advocates
- Provided political support to negotiations on the Global Compact for Migration
- Formed a youth strategy to enhance system-wide efforts
- Launched management reforms to enhance the Organization's work and make it more effective, responsive, transparent and accountable
- Improved ability to plan and budget activities by moving from a biennial to an annual programme budget
- Launched the transition of Headquarters management and support structures into two new departments to be fully operational by January 2019: one providing guidance on strategic, policy and compliance matters and another providing operational and transactional support for the entire Secretariat
- Established the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation
- Developed a strategy on the use of new technologies
- Worked with the World Bank to create the World Bank-United Nations study *Pathways for Peace*

Chapter II
The work of the Organization

A. Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development

1. Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

25. Many people around the world are living better lives than they did a decade ago. Globally, the under-5 mortality rate dropped to 41 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016 from 78 in 2000 — a 47 per cent decline. In the least developed countries, the proportion of the population with access to electricity has more than doubled since 2000. Labour productivity has increased worldwide, the unemployment rate has decreased and Governments have been actively putting in place the institutions and frameworks necessary to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. There are several examples of recent actions taken. In collaboration with the United Nations country teams, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific supported countries in strengthening national statistical systems, including the identification and addressing of gaps in data and statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals and identifying policy priorities. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the League of Arab States concluded the joint 2020 Arab Internet Governance Forum initiative, which led to the creation and adoption of the Second Arab Roadmap on Internet Governance. In Santiago, in April, some 1,000 participants gathered for the forum of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to share progress and experiences in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

27. Progress has been uneven, however, and not rapid enough to meet all the Agenda's Goals and targets in every country by 2030. While extreme poverty has been reduced considerably, it stubbornly persists in some parts of the world. For example, in 2015, 3 in 10 people did not have access to safely managed drinking water services, and 6 in 10 people did not use safely managed sanitation services.

28. We see that conflicts, disasters and the effects of climate change have also adversely affected populations. The past 5-year average global temperature was the highest on record, and in 2017 the world experienced the costliest North Atlantic hurricane season in history, with damages conservatively estimated at $229 billion, highlighting exposure and vulnerabilities which must be systematically and pre-emptively addressed. World hunger appears to be on the rise after a prolonged decline, mainly because of conflicts, drought and disasters linked to weather- and water-related hazards. The number of undernourished people rose from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016. Through its special meeting on the "Aftermath of recent hurricanes: achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda", the Economic and Social Council demonstrated the disproportionate impact on countries with a high level of exposure and vulnerability to climate change, many of which were small island developing States, and the need to increase their access to concessional finance given their high level of indebtedness. We need to take concerted action to address countries' vulnerability to climate change to ensure that no one is left behind.

29. Although the high-level political forum on sustainable development of 2018, with a focus on making societies sustainable and resilient, reflected some very positive initiatives, it also showed that we urgently need to step up efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in areas such as energy, water and terrestrial ecosystems. An integrated approach to the implementation of sustainable development, climate change and disaster risk reduction policies remains pivotal. Countries — including some of the richest ones — are well behind in embarking on sustainable consumption and production pathways. The voluntary national reviews presented at the high-level forum are a powerful way for countries to exchange lessons

and experiences in implementing the Goals. In 2018, 47 countries carried out such reviews. I encourage all countries to conduct a voluntary national review between now and September 2020.

30. Recent improvements in global macroeconomic conditions, with International Monetary Fund (IMF) predictions of 3.9 per cent growth in 2018/19, may offer policymakers greater opportunity to address some of the deep-rooted barriers that continue to hamper progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. A stronger and more stable economic outlook should allow a shift from crisis management and short-term stabilization to longer-term policies that are crucial to the success of the 2030 Agenda. This includes rehabilitating and protecting the environment, making investments disaster-risk-informed, making economic growth more inclusive and tackling institutional barriers to development. For example, in commodity-exporting countries in Africa, Latin America and Western Asia, the recent recovery of commodity prices, coupled with largely stable global financial conditions, has eased fiscal and external pressures, creating room for much-needed investment in resilient infrastructure and social services. Against a backdrop of stronger economic activity, GDP per capita growth in most developing regions is projected to improve.

31. In tandem with recent improvements in global economic growth, downside risks to the global economy have also been building, including a rise in trade tensions and an increasing tendency to move away from the multilateral framework. In many countries, economic performance is expected to be slow and fragile, given significant country-specific vulnerabilities, for example, the need to strengthen institutions, human resources, finance and infrastructure. Among the least developed countries, only a handful are expected to reach the Sustainable Development Goal target of "at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum" by 2019.

32. There was also good news for least developed countries, however. The Committee for Development Policy undertook its triennial review of the list of least developed countries and four countries — Bhutan, Kiribati, São Tomé and Príncipe and Solomon Islands — were recommended for graduation from the least developed country category. The Committee's recommendations follow increases in the national income in all countries, as well as improved education and health outcomes. Government development policies, as well as an improved global economic environment and the coordinated efforts of the international community have driven the progress. Never have so many countries been identified at a single review of the Committee. If the recommendations are endorsed by the Economic and Social Council, 2018 has the potential to be a momentous year, significantly increasing the total number of least developed country graduates.

2. Partnerships

33. Partnerships are key to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations has actively facilitated the engagement of all stakeholders through the Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals online platform. As of June 2018, 3,834 partnerships have been registered by stakeholders from different sectors across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This includes the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework to monitor the progress of existing, and stimulate the launch of new, genuine and durable partnerships for this group of countries.

34. The United Nations has also been tracking the implementation of the more than 1,400 voluntary commitments made by Governments, the United Nations system, civil society organizations, academia, the scientific community and the private sector around the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (the Ocean Conference). Those commitments, together with the Conference outcome document, mark a global breakthrough on the path to the

sustainable management and conservation of our oceans, seas and marine resources. In addition, nine thematic multi-stakeholder "Communities of Ocean Action" were launched in support of Goal 14.

3. Financing for sustainable development

35. The unanimous agreement on the intergovernmental conclusions and recommendations of the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up of 2018 signalled a strong interest on the part of all stakeholders in facilitating the mobilization of adequate financing for sustainable development. The forum drew on the Organization's analytical work, specifically, the report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, which has become an authoritative voice on Sustainable Development Goal financing that resonates beyond the United Nations. The forum attracted a record number of Ministers and other high-level representatives, again underscoring the high level of interest in the United Nations as a forum for discussions on financing issues. The inaugural Sustainable Development Goal Investment Fair was widely welcomed as a promising platform to scale up investments on the ground.

36. The United Nations has also provided practical tools to support developing countries in countering tax base erosion and profit shifting, including the second edition of the Handbook on Selected Issues in Protecting the Tax Base of Developing Countries, and the Practical Portfolios on Protecting the Tax Base of Developing Countries. Drawing on these guidelines, the United Nations delivered capacity development activities to approximately 300 tax officials of 50 developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. These have facilitated the implementation of domestic and international tax law measures in several countries. In the area of tax evasion and avoidance, the United Nations supported the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, in particular in the delivery of the 2017 Model Double Taxation Convention between Developed and Developing Countries; the 2017 Practical Manual on Transfer Pricing for Developing Countries; and the handbook on extractive industries taxation issues for developing countries.

4. Technology

37. In October 2017, we welcomed Sophia, the first robot to be a panellist at the United Nations as she addressed a joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee of the General Assembly. This event provided a preview of the increasing opportunities that technology creates, and how it can facilitate the realization of the 2030 Agenda. While incredibly enabling, these technologies also generate fundamental challenges relating to ethics and human rights, peace and security, jobs and even society as we know it. While many frontier technologies offer great promise for improving lives, livelihood and environmental sustainability, advances in artificial intelligence and automation raise serious concerns regarding the future of work.

38. It is with this in mind that I have established a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, comprising 20 eminent personalities from Governments, the technology industry, academia and civil society. Their task is to raise awareness of the transformative impact of digital technologies across society and the economy, to identify policy, research and information gaps and to present concrete proposals for strengthening cooperation in the digital space in an effective and inclusive manner.

39. The Technology Facilitation Mechanism, comprising 36 United Nations agencies in the Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals continued to work with a group of 10 high-level external advisers. The third annual global Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science,

Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals was held in May and provided a platform to enable greater understanding of different perspectives including those on rapidly advancing technologies. These forums have also provided space for selected innovators from across the world to feature their solutions to Sustainable Development Goal challenges, such as "leaving no one behind".

40. The newly established Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, inaugurated on 4 June 2018 in Istanbul, will expand the use of science, technology and innovation to tackle sustainable development challenges in the least developed countries. It will promote access to intellectual property, foster policies relating to science, technology and innovation, facilitate the transfer of technologies, promote innovation and connect least developed countries into the global economy. With the operationalization of the Technology Bank, we have achieved the first Sustainable Development Goal target: target 17.8.

41. Identifying the spatial location of drought or flood areas is critical and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management moved forward two initiatives that will help to ensure that no one is left behind. The global fundamental geospatial data themes enable national mapping agencies and national statistical offices to offer guidance, including information which combines statistics and geography to provide repositories of national information.

42. The United Nations has actively promoted the use of new data sources and new technologies to improve the availability and dissemination of high quality statistics and indicators. Examples of these public-private partnerships are the Open Sustainable Development Goal Data Hub and collaborative data projects under the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics. To fully implement and monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, political commitment is needed to meet the demand for quality, accurate, open, timely and sufficiently disaggregated data and statistics. In December 2017, I also launched the Centre for Humanitarian Data in The Hague, the Netherlands, to increase the impact of data and its use to inform evidenced-based humanitarian action.

5. Youth

43. Young people are crucial for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Their ideas and innovations, some of which they shared at the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum in January 2018, are an important contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at national and local levels. My Envoy on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka, is proactively addressing youth concerns by continuously advocating for their needs and rights, including their right to participate in decision-making processes at all levels, and by playing a key role in strengthening the United Nations system's coordination on delivering for and with youth. Young people are seizing the opportunity to lead and take responsibility for their future as agents of change. Therefore, including youth in policymaking and the setting of national priorities and plans and their implementation is not only good practice but beneficial for all.

44. Recognizing the importance of youth and the challenges we face in tapping into young people's potential and concerns, the Organization has adopted the United Nations strategy on youth. Through this strategy, we seek to step up our work with and for young people across the three pillars (peace and security, sustainable development and human rights) and to strengthen the Organization's capacity to engage with young people and benefit from their views and ideas. The strategy aims to facilitate increased impact and expanded global, regional and particularly country-level action to address the needs for quality education, health care, decent work and civic and political participation. The strategy includes empowering youth to act and

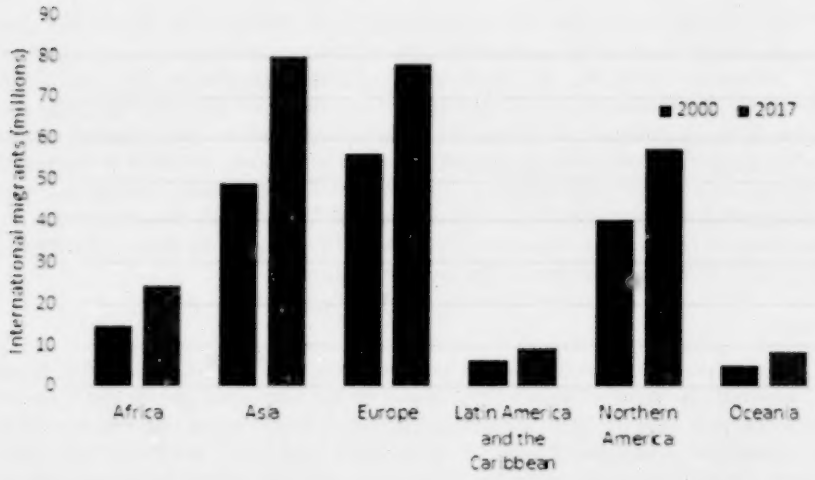
advancing the rights of young people around the world and ensuring their engagement in the implementation, review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda as well as other agendas and frameworks.

6. Taking advantage of global mobility through the global compact for international migration

45. Since 2000, the global number of international migrants has increased by 49 per cent to reach 258 million in 2017 (see figure I). The share of international migrants in the total population has grown too: international migrants now comprise 3.4 per cent of the global population, compared to 2.8 per cent in the year 2000.

46. While the largest number of international migrants reside in Asia (80 million) and Europe (78 million), Africa recorded the fastest increase in the number of international migrants since 2000 (67 per cent). Most international migrants move within their region of birth.

Figure I
Number of international migrants by region of destination, 2017



47. International migration is one of the drivers of population change. In the developed regions, the net inflow of migrants has outpaced "natural increase" (the excess of births over deaths) as the primary source of population growth since the 1990s. International migration is projected to remain a major driver of population growth in developed regions after 2020. In contrast, the impact of migration on overall population change in developing regions is likely to remain relatively small for the next several decades.

48. Officially recorded remittances to low- and middle-income countries reached $466 billion in 2017, an increase of 8.5 per cent compared to 2016. Global remittances, which include flows to high-income countries, grew 7 per cent, to reach $613 billion in 2017. The global average cost of sending $200 was 7.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2018, more than double the Sustainable Development Goal target of less than 3 per cent.

49. In response to the growing scale, complexity and impact of migration, the General Assembly, in July 2018, agreed upon a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and

Regular Migration. The Compact will be presented for adoption at an intergovernmental conference to be held in Morocco in December 2018.

50. Firmly rooted in the 2030 Agenda and the commitments made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the Compact is the first global agreement designed to better manage international migration in all its dimensions, for the benefit of all States and communities, including migrants.

51. This comprehensive framework comprises a range of objectives, actions and avenues for implementation, follow-up and review, all aimed at facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, while reducing the incidence and impact of irregular migration.

7. Forests

52. Forests and trees play an important role in support of life on earth, human well-being and sustainable development. At its thirteenth session, in May 2018, the United Nations Forum on Forests adopted a communication and outreach strategy to raise awareness, within and outside the forest sector. Member States at the Forum adopted the format for voluntary national reporting to the Forum on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. Several Member States also announced their voluntary national contributions towards the achievement of the six global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan, which provides a global framework for sustainably managing all types of forests and trees outside forests, halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation and increasing forest area. To further enhance access of eligible countries to multilateral funding for forests, the Forum at its thirteenth session also adopted guidelines for the operation of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

8. Stepping up our efforts

53. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires immediate and accelerated actions by countries, together with collaborative partnerships among Governments and stakeholders at all levels to implement a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda. While much has been done in the past year, we must step up efforts to achieve meaningful progress by September 2019, when the high-level political forum will take stock of progress towards realizing the vision of the 2030 Agenda. The cross-cutting and comprehensive nature of the Goals makes our task even more challenging, but in every aspect their achievement has the potential of reducing and even eliminating human suffering and preventing the outbreak of conflict, the values that the United Nations is mandated to uphold. The paradigm shift reflected in the 2030 Agenda requires significant adjustments in the skillsets, leadership, and coordination and accountability mechanisms of the United Nations development system. To remain a partner of choice, the United Nations system must ensure that it is better prepared to support countries across all Sustainable Development Goals, with a much greater degree of cohesion, and leveraging partnerships and financing for national priorities on an unprecedented scale. These are key objectives of the ongoing reforms.

B. Maintenance of international peace and security

1. Prevention and sustaining peace

54. In the spirit of the Charter's determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", and in recognition of how far we have to go in meeting this goal, I have made the prevention of crises, vulnerabilities and conflicts my highest priority.

55. Prevention is first and foremost about supporting efforts by national Governments and populations to make full use of the gamut of United Nations tools and programmes. Peace must be homegrown, but it can be effectively bolstered through coherent and strategic international support. To that end, I have conveyed to the United Nations system that prevention should permeate everything we do. It should cut across all pillars of the Organization's work — within respective mandates and resources — and unite us for more effective delivery. To further ensure that we live up to this challenge, I have also articulated the idea of a prevention platform with the aim not of creating new structures or processes, but rather as an internal organizational, cultural and management tool designed to enable us to make maximum use of existing resources and capacities in support of a broader prevention agenda that is commensurate with the risks and challenges our Member States are facing.

56. At the high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, held in April 2018, Member States reiterated their support for precisely such a holistic and coordinated approach across the United Nations system in support of prevention. Many of the recently endorsed reforms will equip the Organization to provide more effective support to Member States across the spectrum of the prevention challenges they face. Through the creation of an integrated regional structure and a more effective positioning of the Peacebuilding Support Office as the hinge with the development pillar, the ongoing restructuring of the United Nations peace and security architecture aims to achieve coordination across the three pillars of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights in support of prevention. The reform of the United Nations development system will enable us to make more concerted progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing that the implementation of these Goals is the most effective contribution we can make to prevention.

57. Sustaining peace is relevant to all the United Nations peace and security tools and entails an emphasis on partnerships, national ownership and recognition of the interlinkages of the United Nations work. I am heartened by the support of Member States for this vision.

2. Adapting tools to new conflicts

58. Our missions on the ground remain critical tools in preventing conflict and sustaining peace: there are 14 peacekeeping operations, one operation supporting the African Union in Somalia and 38 special political missions currently deployed around the world.

59. During the past year, peacekeeping's strong track record was demonstrated by the successful conclusion of the missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, as well as the transition to the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti, a smaller peacekeeping mission in that country with a two-year exit strategy. On the basis of these experiences, we are strengthening our internal arrangements to ensure that transitions from large peacekeeping operations to other forms of United Nations presence, including tailored country team configurations, allow host nations to sustain gains already achieved.

60. Despite recent successes, our peacekeeping missions are increasingly operating in deteriorating security environments encompassing asymmetric threats, transnational organized crime and regionalized conflicts, without clear trajectories for political progress, increasing the toll on our military, police and civilian peacekeepers, 131 of whom died in service in the past year. Our operations are adapting to better perform in these complex environments. As a result of the report of Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz on peacekeeping fatalities, many missions

are implementing specific action plans designed to better protect peacekeepers while maintaining their ability to carry out their mandate, including on the protection of civilians.

61. The response to security threats to our peacekeepers must, however, be set in a broader context, one in which many missions are now asked to implement their tasks in the absence of viable political processes. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, technical progress has not been matched by political progress on the political agreement of 31 December 2016, leading me to recommend to the Security Council adjustments to the posture, priorities and sequencing of the tasks of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in that country. Similarly, a resolution in respect of Abyei, a border region disputed by the Sudan and South Sudan, remains elusive. I have proposed to the Security Council an expansion of the political engagement of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, while recommending operational changes designed to reduce the potential for escalation and pave the way for renewed political dialogue.

62. Protection of civilians remains a significant challenge. Children continue to be increasingly and disproportionately affected by armed conflict. In 2017, following changing conflict dynamics and the intensification of armed clashes, there were at least 6,000 verified violations against children by government forces and over 15,000 by a range of non-State armed groups. Violations perpetrated included recruitment and use, sexual violence, killing and maiming, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian assistance. Surges in the number of abductions point to a sustained reliance on children for combat and support duties. In response to high levels of conflict-related sexual violence, the Organization has increasingly focused on prevention through dialogue, addressing conflict-related sexual violence in peace processes, and addressing impunity.

63. In response to these complex environments, United Nations peacekeeping missions have developed new tools to implement protection mandates across the whole mission. A new framework on accountability for senior leadership lays out clearer responsibilities for both civilian and uniformed personnel. Recognizing that protection is fundamentally about prevention, missions have strengthened analysis and early warning of threats to civilians, as well as innovative community engagement and local conflict mediation efforts. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has developed a comprehensive approach focused first on de-escalation and resolution of conflicts, while shifting its posture from protection by presence (being there) to protection through projection (taking action). Acknowledging that partnerships are an essential part of prevention, the protection of civilians sites in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, which continue to host and protect more than 200,000 internally displaced persons, remain an example of close coordination with humanitarian partners.

64. To respond to the challenges facing peacekeeping, on 28 March 2018, I introduced the Action for Peacekeeping initiative at the Security Council high-level debate on peacekeeping. I called for all peacekeeping stakeholders, including the Secretariat, the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries, financial contributors, host countries and regional organizations to renew their commitment to peacekeeping by identifying ways for all partners to better support peacekeeping. We plan to capture our respective and mutual commitments in a declaration that Member States will be invited to support later in 2018.

65. For its part, the Secretariat must better fulfil its responsibilities to peacekeeping stakeholders and to peacekeepers in the field. By means of an action plan to improve the security of peacekeepers, we are ensuring that personnel are better trained and equipped to face high-risk environments, including by improvised explosive device

risk mitigation against asymmetric threats where adversaries to peace have greater fire power. We are also taking steps to improve performance. Through several United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerials, we have received new military and police pledges, which are being managed by way of a new Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System website. Triangular partnerships between Member States with expertise, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat have also enhanced critical skills of our operations in engineering, signals and command and control. Thanks to these advances, we can better fit units to operating environments and identify opportunities to fill training and capability gaps.

66. Special political missions remain a flexible and versatile modality of response to a wide range of situations. Ranging from special envoys and regional offices to country-specific missions, they share a common purpose — to support political processes and work with partners to secure sustainable peace. Many of these missions — in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Somalia, for example — are deployed in challenging security contexts and, as do my Special Envoys for Syria and Yemen, carry responsibility for complex peace processes amid ongoing high levels of violence. Others, especially in the three regional offices for Central Africa, Central Asia and West Africa and the Sahel, often serve as "first responders" to risks of instability and conflict. Special political missions and envoys routinely make use of a range of United Nations mediation capabilities and expertise, including the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers. My High-level Advisory Board on Mediation is a new resource also available across the range of our activities.

67. The regionalization of conflict is one of the most challenging trends we face today. The Middle East, for example, is characterized by several interconnected conflicts with enormous humanitarian consequences far beyond the region itself. The Middle East peace process remains stalled and the situation in Gaza is deteriorating. Against the regional backdrop, Iraq and its partners successfully completed operations against ISIL and the Organization supported major stabilization efforts in the liberated areas. Libya and Yemen are both at critical junctures. Having appointed a new Special Representative, I launched the United Nations action plan on Libya in September 2017. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya, based in Tunis since 2011, has adopted a bottom-up approach to supporting the political process, while also planning for the full mission to return to Libya in 2019. In Yemen too, a recently appointed Special Envoy has brought renewed impetus to the political process. Despite recent intensification in the conflict, the Special Envoy presented to the Security Council in June 2018 elements of a negotiation framework, which he hopes will allow for a resumption of peace talks.

68. Given the cross-border nature of security threats such as transnational crime and drug trafficking, regional, national and subnational approaches are all essential to the United Nations engagements in much of Africa. I will continue to advocate for integrated approaches to addressing security, development and humanitarian challenges, including through the work of my regional offices. I especially recognize the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to mobilize relevant stakeholders to advance implementation of an integrated strategy for the Sahel.

69. I continue to emphasize the enormous potential of credible, inclusive and peaceful elections. Together with our partners, notably the Economic Community of West African States, we supported the successful holding of elections in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The strengthening of the United Nations Office in Nairobi in 2017 improved our capacity to support regional organizations, national institutions, and local peace architectures. More recently, I appointed a Special Adviser on Madagascar to help to facilitate a national dialogue process and create a conducive environment for the upcoming elections.

70. I welcome the historic agreement between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the long-standing name issue, reached under the auspices of my Personal Envoy, which demonstrates the value of perseverance and quiet diplomacy. My Special Envoy for Burundi supported the East African Community-led inter-Burundi Dialogue. My Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region has launched a joint mechanism with the Regional Oversight Mechanism for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address the repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants.

71. Despite continuing challenges, the United Nations has also contributed significantly to the promising peace process in Colombia. My visit in January 2018 signalled the Organization's commitment to continue working together with Colombia, including through the complementary work of the United Nations Verification Mission established in September 2017 and the United Nations country team. In Myanmar, the world is witnessing its fastest growing refugee crisis, following the violence of August 2017 in Rakhine State. We must implement the joint response plan agreed to by Myanmar and the United Nations and address the underlying causes, including the issue of citizenship for the Rohingya, to prevent further violence. My newly appointed Special Envoy made her first visit to Myanmar in June 2018.

3. Effective partnerships and collaborations

72. Effective partnerships amplify the United Nations efforts and increase collective chances at success. At the regional level, we have institutionalized our partnership with the African Union, including through a Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security set up in 2017. The United Nations Support Office in Somalia has continued to provide support to the African Union Mission in Somalia, the regional peacekeeping mission operated by the African Union with the approval of the United Nations. However, region-led peace operations in Africa lack sustained and predictable financing, and I encourage Member States to consider my proposals in this regard. Following my recent visit to the headquarters of the European Union, I look forward to finalizing a framework document in September that sets out our organizations' joint priorities to support peace operations and encourage prevention. Partnerships with other regional actors continue to move forward and, on 12 and 13 June 2018, I convened a high-level dialogue with the heads of 20 regional and other organizations to discuss key strategic issues.

73. We must also continue to work with international financial institutions. The United Nations-World Bank study, *Pathways for Peace*, is the first endeavour of its kind and the United Nations is working closely with the Bank on its recommendations. The Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations that I signed with the President of the World Bank in April 2017 explicitly shifts our collaboration from crisis response and recovery to risk reduction and prevention. The Strategic Partnership Framework agreement with the World Bank that we signed in May 2018 further aligns our support to countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and climate and post-crisis humanitarian responses.

4. Women and peace and security

74. The women and peace and security agenda remains a priority. The United Nations continues to make progress in enhancing women's participation in peacekeeping, and approximately 11 per cent of staff officers and observers are female, nearing the target of 15 per cent by 2018. The United Nations also works to promote women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes and to promote gender sensitive agreements, including by developing a close working relationship with Member State regional and national networks of women mediators. With regard to

financing of the agenda, 36 per cent of Peacebuilding Fund support went to programmes intended to further gender equality, surpassing the 15 per cent minimum called for by the Secretary-General in 2009. As 15 per cent has been adopted as a minimum standard by a growing number of Member States and other organizations, other United Nations entities working on peacebuilding, recovery, or countering violent extremism still have more work to do to track their investments on gender equality and reach this minimum threshold. Equally, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making in peacekeeping, as well as local and national peace processes, making further efforts on the participation front imperative.

5. Youth and peace and security

75. The Security Council's recent focus on youth and peace and security, including its open debate in April and its adoption of a resolution in June, highlights the important role that young people play in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. The recently finalized United Nations strategy on youth prioritizes supporting young people as catalysts for peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian action. This includes the promotion of an enabling environment that promotes intercultural and interreligious dialogue, is conducive to young people's actions, and recognizes their important contributions in informal and formal processes, including in mediation, conflict resolution and peace processes.

6. Strengthening United Nations support to national and intergovernmental processes

76. Effective governance and the rule of law are important for sustainable peace, and we continue to enhance institutional support efforts. In Liberia, an improved legal framework helped to resolve electoral disputes peacefully following the elections held in October 2017. Security sector reform has enhanced the security of States and citizens, for example in the Central African Republic where the United Nations mission supported the development of a national strategy on these issues. United Nations police continue to support national police services to better protect populations, while civil affairs staff work to support local reconciliation. Similarly, the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service have supported stabilization through its coordination in clearing explosive contamination from key infrastructure, such as the Qusur water treatment plant in Iraq, which now provides clean water to 300,000 residents.

77. Improving Organization-wide collaboration in support of national processes is an ongoing priority. A joint programme between the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Political Affairs assisted more than 60 countries in 2017, largely by deploying peace and development advisers to support resident coordinators in building national capacities for conflict prevention. Despite an increasingly challenging funding environment, Member State demand for United Nations electoral assistance remains consistently strong, and United Nations support is currently being provided in some 60 countries.

78. With regard to intergovernmental processes, in 2017 the Security Council significantly expanded and strengthened the sanctions regime on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which may have contributed to bringing about the current dialogue for peace on the peninsula. The Council also introduced sanctions on Mali. In addition, the Security Council undertook five missions to enhance its understanding of realities on the ground. The Secretariat has moreover supported the Council's functioning and performance by providing more accessible, comprehensive and accurate data on its work. Not least, we must redouble efforts to find a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, including through the United Nations support to the General Assembly Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

79. The work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund remains invaluable and I have called for the revitalization of the Peacebuilding Support Office and a quantum leap in funding for the Peacebuilding Fund. The Commission's engagement with the Security Council has catalysed international attention and support, which, for example, resulted in $1.9 billion pledged to support the Gambia, while the Fund assisted Liberia in operationalizing its peacebuilding plan. The Peacebuilding Fund programmed a record-setting $157 million for 82 projects in 31 countries in 2017.

C. Development of Africa

80. As I am a strong believer in African-led solutions to African problems, I made the solemn promise that the relationship between the United Nations and the African Union will be based on mutual respect, solidarity, complementarity and interdependence to deliver effectively for the African people. Our mutual goals and aspirations are not only about economic development, environmental protection and reduced conflict, but also about a fundamental commitment to social justice for all and leaving no one behind. These are also the guiding principles for our work and partnerships on the continent.

81. To complement the United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security accomplished in 2017, we signed the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the African Union Summit in January 2018. The goal of the new framework is to further accelerate the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in Africa, one of my highest priorities. It envisions stronger coordination between the two organizations to ensure that both Agendas are mainstreamed into national planning frameworks and contribute to people-centred and environmentally sustainable structural transformation in Africa. A harmonized and integrated approach to the implementation and monitoring of the two Agendas will minimize duplication, optimize domestic resource mobilization and strengthen partnerships. It will thus help us to better serve the true beneficiaries of our efforts, the Africans themselves, enabling them to unleash their full social and economic potential.

82. To enhance our collective response in the Sahel region, for instance, an international high-level conference on the Sahel was held in February 2018 by the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union, which resulted in pledges of €414 million, complemented by a technical agreement and a robust compliance framework to address human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, the United Nations has developed a United Nations support plan for the Sahel to accelerate implementation of key programmes in support of national and regional priorities. The plan, which is aligned with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, provides for strategic support by the United Nations across the governance, peace, recovery and socioeconomic pillars.

83. Intra-African exports made up only 18 per cent of total exports in 2016, compared to 59 and 69 per cent for intra-Asia and intra-Europe exports, respectively. To address this issue, in March 2018, in Kigali, 44 African Heads of State and Government signed the framework to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area, a landmark initiative of the African Union. The Free Trade Area will cover a market of 1.2 billion people and a gross domestic product of $2.5 trillion. By progressively eliminating tariffs on intra-African trade, it will contribute significantly to Africa's regional economic integration and structural transformation. Enhanced intra-continental trade will potentially generate cross-border entrepreneurial

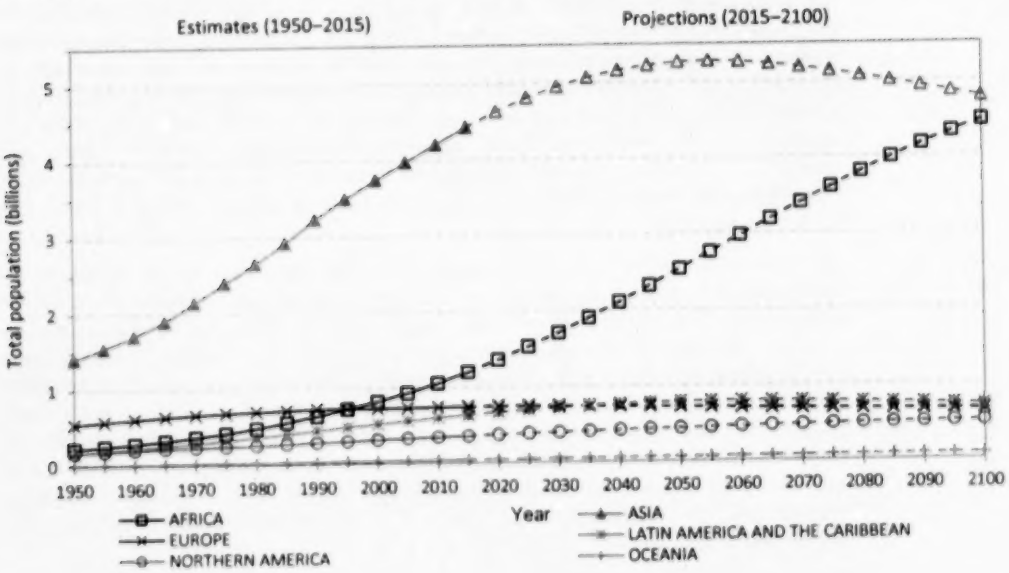
initiatives and decent jobs, help to formalize the informal sector and create opportunities for the growing youth population, thus harnessing the continent's demographic dividend.

84. The United Nations has undertaken several activities in 2018 in a number of African countries (for example, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Comoros, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali and the United Republic of Tanzania) to provide integrated packages of support, including toolkits and software designed by the Economic Commission for Africa to align the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. The annual Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development met to review progress, promote learning by sharing experiences, good practices and lessons learned and build consensus on policy recommendations to accelerate implementation of the development agenda.

Development of Africa: demographic aspects

85. Changes in the global population affect the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; therefore the location and demographic characteristics of people need to be taken into account. Africa has the fastest growing population of all major regions and that is expected to continue for decades to come (see figure II). Supporting larger populations and improving their quality of life without bringing about negative environmental impacts or otherwise diminishing the quality of life of future generations remains the central challenge of sustainable development.

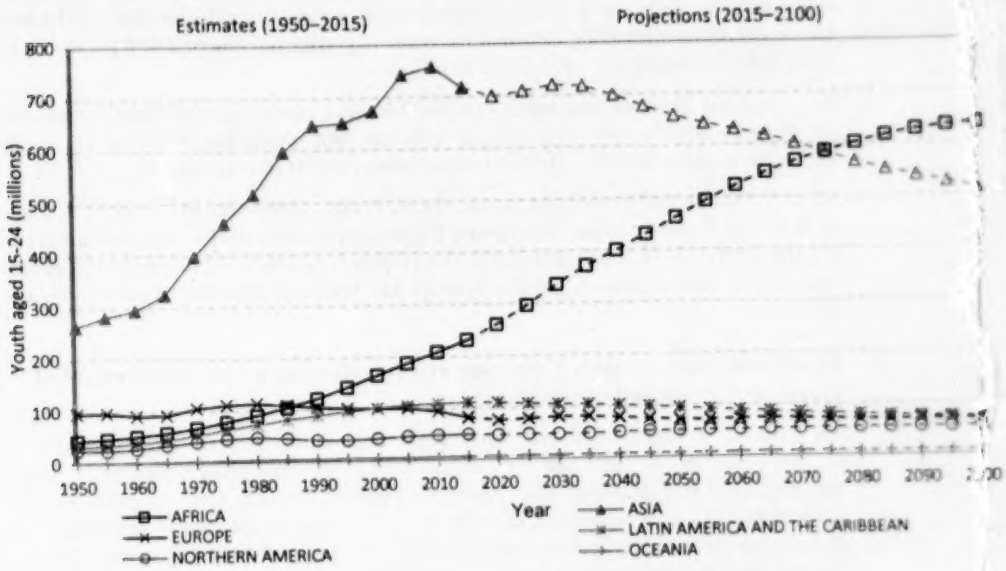
Figure II
World population estimates and projections, by region, 1950–2100



86. Africa is the only region where the number of young people aged 15–24 years is projected to increase until mid-century (see figure III). The ability of countries to harness the demographic dividend depends critically on investments in education, health care and job opportunities needed for a productive integration of working-age women and men into the labour force. If human capital investment falls short or if the labour market is unable to generate productive employment opportunities, the potential of the demographic dividend may be squandered. The consideration of these

major changes in the size, characteristics and location of the human population should be part of data-driven planning for sustainable development.

Figure III
Youth aged 15–24 by region, 1950–2100



D. Promotion and protection of human rights

87. The year 2018 marks the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document underpinning all progress made in the advancement of human rights at the global level, so that all people can live in freedom, equality and dignity. Challenges to the protection of human rights are a global phenomenon. Entrenched levels of discrimination, inequality and violent conflict continue to displace millions of people around the world. In 2017, 68.5 million people were on the move, with women and children the most vulnerable to further exploitation. The global threat to democracy and the rule of law is steadily increasing; this is manifested by the frequent repression of demonstrations, human rights defenders and the media, accompanied by the dismantling of institutions and policies that promote greater justice.

1. Protection of human rights in preventing conflict and promoting peace and security

88. Alarmed by the large-scale military operations in the North Rakhine region of Myanmar that caused some 900,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee their homes, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights dispatched monitoring teams to Bangladesh. The subsequent reports starkly highlighted the extreme suffering of the refugees and resulted in the establishment of an independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar by the Human Rights Council. In other contexts, the Council has mandated the continuation or establishment of a total of nine fact-finding missions, commissions of inquiry and groups of experts.

89. Monitoring of the human rights situation in Ukraine in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/262 contributed to early warning and provided support for conflict resolution activities under the auspices of the Minsk agreements.

90. The United Nations supported the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms including in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia and the Gambia. In Kosovo, we worked closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross and authorities in Pristina and Belgrade to clarify the fate of 1,658 persons who went missing during the 1998–2000 conflict.

91. In April 2018, we developed the first African Union-United Nations Framework on Human Rights and policies on conduct and discipline relating to sexual exploitation and abuse for African Union peace support operations.

92. Protecting and promoting human rights is the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda, as the High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized at the conference held in Vienna in May 2018. The Sustainable Development Goals "seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls".

2. Broadening human rights protection and contributing to the enhancement of democratic space and development

93. During the period covered, we continued to monitor human rights situations in several countries, in particular the situations of vulnerable groups such as migrants, the displaced and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. The protection of human rights and the rule of law are key to the proper functioning of democratic institutions and the maintenance of civic and political space, which is increasingly under threat as a result of the adoption of repressive security legislation and emergency measures. We have therefore supported States in developing more comprehensive and human rights-compliant approaches to their security concerns through the provision of capacity-building and assistance to countries facing terrorism threats and attacks. We have also supported approaches that enhance inter-faith and inter-community understanding through the Faith for Rights initiative be means of which faith-based actors explore the deep connections between religion and human rights. On 14 July 2017, we launched the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.

94. The United Nations contributed to the protection of human rights defenders worldwide by providing support to national human rights institutions and carefully monitoring and reporting on cases of reprisals against persons cooperating with the United Nations. In 2017 we reported the largest number of cases spread across the broadest geographical locations, comprising 39 cases in 29 countries. Consequently, we have increased our advocacy work across all regions of the world to help better protect human rights defenders.

95. In Guatemala, we supported the National Statistics Institute in integrating a rights-based approach to the 2018 national population and housing census, facilitating its engagement with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. In Kenya, Palestine and Uganda, national human rights institutions and national statistical offices have joined efforts to better engage with vulnerable population groups. In Chile, Germany, Malaysia, Thailand, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam, we provided support to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; and, in collaboration with academia, we launched an interactive e-learning module on operationalizing the right to development while implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Highlights of human rights achievements in 2017

- 45,000 victims of torture in 80 countries received rehabilitation support through 178 non-governmental organizations
- 30,000 victims of contemporary forms of slavery obtained assistance and redress
- 4,020 visits to places of detention were conducted
- 7,511 monitoring missions were undertaken to investigate and document human rights situations worldwide
- Over 2,600 training sessions were delivered to around 54,700 government and civil society partners in more than 50 countries on monitoring and investigation, access to justice, anti-discrimination standards, responsible business conduct and other key human rights issues
- Technical support to 70 national human rights institutions, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iceland, Kuwait, Lebanon, Madagascar, Seychelles, South Sudan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan
- Human rights treaty bodies considered a total of 165 State party reports and received 138 additional State party reports on progress towards fulfilling their international human rights obligations
- Officials from some 70 States increased their knowledge and skills on international human rights and their reporting requirements

96. Listed here are highlights of the status of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The world seventy years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Positive developments

- Agreement achieved on 18 human rights treaties and options
- 104 countries have outlawed capital punishment, compared to 9 in 1948
- The majority of States have a national parliament, compared to 26 in 1948
- Women have the right to vote in 198 countries, compared to 91 in 1948
- Freedom of information laws and policies have been adopted by 111 countries
- The Human Rights Council continues its universal periodic review, which reviews human rights records of all United Nations Member States
- United Nations Special Rapporteurs as independent experts appointed by the Human Rights Council carry out country visits, monitor, advise and publicly report on situations where human rights violations may be occurring
- Peacekeeping operations now contain human rights components that address human rights issues

Remaining gaps

- 1 in 10 children are subjected to child labour
- 1 in 3 people in detention are held without trial
- 880 million urban residents live in slums
- 250 million women are married when under 15 years old
- 29 per cent of children under 5 years do not have birth registration
- On average, a journalist is killed every four days

E. Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts

97. Humanitarian challenges are on the rise as the United Nations mobilizes humanitarian action to relieve human suffering and save lives. The *World Humanitarian Data and Trends* report for 2017 disclosed that 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. Conflicts continue to drive humanitarian needs and displacement. Flagrant violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws deepen humanitarian crises. Denial of humanitarian access and bureaucratic impediments to aid delivery compound civilian suffering.

98. During the course of 2017, the United Nations and its partners targeted a record 105.1 million people in 40 countries with aid, saving millions of lives, reducing suffering and promoting human dignity. The United Nations appealed for $24.7 billion in funding for humanitarian assistance and donors' funding responses reached $13.8 billion. Yet the growth in need has outpaced the increase in funding.

99. Through enhanced operations and funding mobilization, the United Nations and partners fought off famine in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, and provided life-saving aid and protection to 700,000 Rohingya refugees. Early support was also mobilized to assist local responses to three major hurricanes in the Caribbean. The Central Emergency Response Fund enabled rapid responses to these crises.

100. The Central Emergency Response Fund reached a record income of $513 million in 2017, of which $418.2 million enabled urgent, life-saving assistance in 36 countries. Country-based pooled funds raised $824 million, of which $350 million was allocated to the four countries facing famine and $117 million to the whole-of-Syria response. The 18 country-based pooled funds disbursed $647 million, enabling 636 organizations to implement 1,194 projects targeting almost 80 million people.

101. In 2017, 30.6 million new internally displaced people were registered in 143 countries and territories, including 18.8 million displaced by disasters. The number of those forcibly displaced by conflict and violence reached 11.8 million in 2017, up from 6.9 million in 2016, bringing the total to 40 million people who remained internally displaced because of conflict by the end of 2017.

102. In the first half of 2018, 136 million people in 26 countries were in need of humanitarian assistance, and United Nations-coordinated response plans required $25.3 billion. In April 2018, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a three-year Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons was launched.

103. The United Nations relies on its partners across the international community to translate the obligation to protect civilians into practical measures and hold violators accountable.

F. Promotion of justice and international law

104. United Nations rule of law assistance in countries emerging from conflict has contributed to the protection of civilians, the extension of State authority, the fight against impunity and sustainable peace. These efforts include ensuring accountability for serious crimes that fuel and perpetuate conflict.

105. The global focal point for police, justice and corrections arrangement has further promoted a coordinated, coherent and joint delivery of United Nations rule of law assistance in conflict and post-conflict settings, drawing on the unique and distinct strength of its members, combining operational interventions, political analysis and cross-pillar integration.

106. To achieve the best results, constructive engagement of Member States with the Secretariat is essential before intergovernmental organs take decisions on establishing or supporting new accountability mechanisms in order to ensure due consideration of United Nations policies and best practices.

1. Support to domestic judicial authorities

107. The global focal point has provided timely and comprehensive support to 18 countries in 2017/18, including in transitioning contexts to ensure that inclusive and accountable security and justice institutions are sustained after the withdrawal of peace operations.

108. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations supported the effective operationalization of the Special Criminal Court, including the arrest, handover and secure detention of alleged criminals and high-profile members of armed groups. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, support to the domestic military justice system led to landmark convictions in 2017 for rape, sexual slavery and attacks against civilians. In Mali, assistance to a specialized investigation unit on terrorism and transnational organized crime has increased the number of arrests and trials. In Afghanistan, the United Nations-backed specialized court and prosecutors' office have renewed their commitment to fight corruption; and, in Darfur, support has been provided to rural courts to resolve intercommunal land disputes that fuel conflict.

2. International courts and tribunals

109. The Secretariat provided a dossier of documents to the International Court of Justice in connection with the request for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. In January 2018, I chose the Court as the means to be used for the resolution of the border controversy between Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. My good offices remain available to the two States to complement the judicial process.

110. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia closed in December 2017, having accounted for all 161 persons who were indicted for genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity. The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals delivered its first ever appeal judgment at its branch in The Hague in the *Šešelj* case in April 2018. In June 2018, the Mechanism referred a contempt of court case to Serbia for trial, the first such referral by the Mechanism.

111. In 2017, we made substantial progress in providing technical assistance to the African Union Commission and the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan for the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan.

112. The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes

under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 presented its first report to the General Assembly, reflecting on steps taken towards its full operationalization.

113. At the request of the Security Council, I took steps to establish an investigative team to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable, by collecting, preserving and storing evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by ISIL in Iraq.

114. We continue to cooperate with the International Criminal Court by providing support pursuant to the Relationship Agreement, including through the sharing of information and evidence, and the provision of services, facilities and various forms of practical support.

3. Promotion of international law

115. Three regional courses in international law in three continents were offered and 52 lectures were recorded for the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. In 2018, the International Law Commission commemorated its seventieth anniversary, and adopted two major international law instruments.

116. Equally important is the ongoing process for an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The General Assembly will convene an intergovernmental conference to consider the text of the instrument. Another topic of increasing interest concerns anthropogenic underwater noise, which was the focus of the meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea held in June 2018.

Justice and international law: impact highlights

- The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia closed after accounting for all 161 persons who were indicted for genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity
- 184 victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Mali and Mexico received legal assistance to obtain compensation and redress
- More than 320 officials from 135 States have benefited from the treaty body capacity-building programme, which also increases the level of implementation of treaty body recommendations at the national level

G. Disarmament

117. On 24 May, I announced my agenda for disarmament, which sets out concrete actions in three areas. The first, **disarmament to save humanity**, includes returning to a common vision for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. As nuclear disarmament is vital for national, regional and international security, I will work to facilitate dialogue on further negotiations to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I will work with all States parties to ensure the Treaty's continuing health and vitality, especially in the lead-up to the 2020 Review Conference, the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into force. I also welcome the historic adoption on 7 July 2017 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons, which demonstrated the strong and legitimate international support that exists for a permanent end to the threat posed by nuclear arms.

118. I am concerned about the uncertain future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, through which robust verification measures ensured the peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Every effort should be made to preserve these verification gains. I am encouraged by recent developments in the Korean peninsula, including the announced moratoriums by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on its longer-range ballistic missile launches and the reported closure of its nuclear test site. I welcome the historic summits between the two Koreas and between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. I encourage the parties to continue their dialogue towards complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

119. The continuing use of chemical weapons is deeply troubling. The repeated breach of this taboo is exacerbated by the environment of impunity, following the termination of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in November 2017. I have repeatedly advocated for the establishment of an independent, impartial and professional attribution mechanism. Those who use chemical weapons must be held accountable and the damage inflicted on the non-proliferation architecture must be repaired.

120. The second area of my agenda, **disarmament that saves lives**, places humans at the centre of our collective efforts to control arms and seeks to mobilize new partnerships, generating momentum for sustainable security by addressing the devastating impact of explosive weapons and small arms on civilians. As a practical step, the United Nations will promote the collection of data on civilian casualties and the exchange of policies and practice by armed forces and United Nations peacekeeping operations. I support efforts of Member States to develop a political declaration, as well as limitations relating to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The United Nations will also establish a dedicated funding facility to enable coordinated and sustainable small arms control measures in countries most affected by armed violence.

121. The third agenda area is **disarmament for future generations**. Developments in science and technology bring clear benefits but we also see the risks and challenges posed by autonomous weapons, artificial intelligence and cyberthreats. At the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, I will report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts. I foresee a spectrum of responses and multi-stakeholder coalitions being required to meet these potential challenges. Regarding cybersecurity, considerable progress has been made on the issue by several groups of governmental experts with respect to the application of international law, cybernorms, rules and principles of responsible State behaviour, and confidence-building and capacity-building measures. To enhance understanding of frontier technology issues, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been developing an online training course for diplomats and all interested stakeholders which will be released in October 2018.

122. Longstanding divisions in the Conference on Disarmament have impeded its mandate as the world's negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament. Nonetheless, after 22 years of stymied action, some encouraging signs were seen when, in February 2018, the Conference established five subsidiary bodies to deepen technical discussions and broaden areas of agreement in all disarmament fields. I am also encouraged by signs of revival in the Disarmament Commission, which after nearly two decades took up a new agenda item: transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities to prevent an arms race in outer space, an essential global security initiative.

H. Drug control, crime prevention and combating terrorism

1. Drug control

123. The *World Drug Report* for 2018 indicates that more than 31 million people suffer from drug use disorders and that opioids continue to pose the most serious challenge. The United Nations provides support to Governments on the basis of the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held in 2016, prioritizing evidence-based policies to promote public health, human rights and development. Partnerships are key and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Health Organization launched a joint publication on the treatment of people with drug use disorders as alternatives to conviction. I believe that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and effectively address the world drug problem are mutually reinforcing, as illustrated in the report "Evidence for enhancing resilience to opium poppy cultivation in Shan State, Myanmar" comparing 600 opium- and non-opium-growing villages.

2. Crime prevention

124. Preventing conflict and violence is one of my top priorities. Large-scale conflicts as well as intra-community violence and tensions are frequently fuelled by various forms of crime. The incidence of homicides and violence relating to organized crime remains high in many regions in the world and, when linked to the illicit trafficking of arms and commodities, can derail efforts towards peace, human rights protection and sustainable development.

125. Women and children remain particularly vulnerable to all forms of crime, including cybercrime such as online sexual exploitation and abuse, which is estimated to generate some $1.5 trillion in revenue per year. We are increasing our efforts to address these crimes. For example, in a particular case a paedophile who used the dark web to access and abuse more than 80 children in three countries was arrested and convicted as a result of support provided by the United Nations.

126. Finding solutions to cross-border challenges remains one of my greatest concerns, including the challenge of curbing illicit financial flows. In 2017, UNODC and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development made significant progress in developing a methodology to track these flows, which is currently being piloted in several locations with potential for scaling-up. I hope that in the near future we will find a solid basis for tackling the diversion of public resources away from the common good. Consequently, we have strengthened our partnerships with the World Bank and the review mechanism of the United Nations Convention against Corruption to provide a more comprehensive support to Governments that are committed to tackling corruption. Corruption is an increasingly destructive practice, leading to serious political consequences as it hollows out State structures and erodes trust between a Government and its people.

127. In June 2018, we launched the first *Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants*, in which key smuggling patterns and routes across the world were examined, and, in May 2018, we expanded the number of memberships in mechanisms such as the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. This enables the United Nations to implement more holistic solutions to this problem and to related human rights abuses, such as sexual slavery and other forms of bonded labour.

3. Combating international terrorism

128. There is no doubt that the transnational nature of terrorism requires a multidimensional international response. The General Assembly and the Security

Council have repeatedly called for the strengthening of international cooperation on counter-terrorism and in 2017 they authorized the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism. In the current year, the Office has been enhanced to ensure greater coherence and complementarity in United Nations programmes and technical assistance to Member States towards implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. This is based on a variety of criteria, including the assessments and analysis of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate as well as requests from Member States.

129. Strategic partnerships are key to providing comprehensive responses to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism. In May 2018, the Office of Counter-Terrorism partnered with the United Nations Development Programme to develop and implement national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism. Currently, over two thirds of all United Nations projects dedicated to curbing acts of terrorism and violent extremism have a focus on the preventive pillar of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. These involve 16 United Nations and other international entities that implement some 260 projects in more than 80 countries. Over 1,000 participants attended the first-ever United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States on 28 and 29 June 2018. The Conference helped to strengthen multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation, break down silos and build new partnerships.

Chapter III
Strengthening the Organization

130. A significant endeavour in the past year has been my reform effort that aims at making the Organization more effective, nimble, field focused and efficient to serve Member States and their populations. This is the first time that the United Nations has embarked on a reform agenda of this scale.

The repositioning of the United Nations development system

131. On 31 May, the General Assembly provided robust mandates to take forward the repositioning of the United Nations development system to support the 2030 Agenda. The resolution adopted offers a unique opportunity for the system to become more than the sum of its parts and effectively deliver on the ambition of the 2030 Agenda. The system initiated transition planning immediately after the adoption of the resolution, with the aim of repositioning the system starting in January 2019.

132. In 2019 we will see the progressive establishment of a new generation of United Nations country teams, with enhanced skillsets, better tailored to country realities and more responsive to national priorities. We will also implement all mandates to establish a reinvigorated resident coordinator system, fully dedicated to the coordination of the development activities of the United Nations in countries and with enhanced accountability for system-wide results. We will redouble efforts to advance common premises and shared services across entities, generating significant savings that can be reapplied into development programmes.

133. These reforms are highly significant to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals and the litmus test will be results on the ground. The renewed United Nations Development Group and the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration are already operational and will bring about solutions, on the required scale, to challenges faced by countries and United Nations country teams. I count on Member States to continue to support the implementation of these reform efforts, including by providing the necessary funding to the resident coordinator system and the system at large. Repositioning the United Nations development system is a shared responsibility.

Enhancing coherence of peace and security activities

134. The goal of Headquarters peace and security pillar reform is to make its undertakings more coherent, nimble and effective through a "whole-of-pillar" approach that prioritizes prevention and sustaining peace. It significantly addresses fragmentation by moving away from working through separate departments towards a single, integrated effort with two closely linked departments: the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations. The two Departments will share a single regional political-operational structure, which will be responsible for the management of all political and operational peace and security activities. A strengthened Peacebuilding Support Office within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs will connect the pillar with system-wide efforts and tools across the conflict spectrum, ensuring a more holistic approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. On 5 July 2018, the General Assembly approved the proposed restructuring, to be implemented effective 1 January 2019.

Management reform

135. In October 2017, I proposed a new management paradigm that will empower managers to determine how best to use their resources to support programme delivery and mandate implementation. This will mean transferring greater responsibility to

managers and holding them accountable for the programme and financial performance of their programmes. Support to managers will be improved by streamlining and simplifying the policy framework, providing clear guidance and restructuring the current management and support departments to better support delivery of all programmes and provide all managers with quality assurance and strategic policy guidance.

136. In July 2018, the General Assembly approved the restructuring of the current Department of Management and Department of Field Support into two new departments. The new departments will become operational on 1 January 2019. Both departments will service the entire Secretariat, with one providing guidance on strategic, policy and compliance matters and the other providing operational and transactional support to managers. The impact of this transformation will enable the United Nations to become more nimble, effective, transparent, accountable, efficient, pragmatic and decentralized to better support its normative and operational activities.

Ending sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse

137. The Organization is taking concrete steps to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse as well as sexual harassment and is establishing a mechanism to protect and support victims. To accelerate our work in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, I have crafted, in cooperation with Member States, a voluntary compact which identifies specific prevention and response actions, elevates the interests of victims, and develops a sexual exploitation and abuse risk management toolkit that provides field missions with a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and mitigating risks. To address sexual harassment, I have mobilized senior managers to improve guidance, information and services for staff, and I have launched a 24-hour helpline for colleagues to access information and confidential support. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is implementing a fast-track procedure to receive, process and address all sexual harassment complaints. In addition, the United Nations is creating a specialized investigation team.

Protecting whistleblowers

138. Protecting whistle-blowers is critical to rooting out fraud, corruption, sexual abuse and other forms of misconduct. Staff must feel safe to report wrongdoing and believe the Organization will take action against perpetrators. I have significantly strengthened the whistle-blower protection policy by extending protection from retaliation to include individual contractors and consultants and allowing the transfer of the retaliator (as opposed to the complainant) to another office after an investigation. The policy is now in line with best practices and will remain under continuous review. Efforts are under way to socialize this policy throughout the Organization. I am also strengthening the Ethics Office, increasing its independence.

Enterprise risk management

139. Given the nature and complexity of risks the Organization faces, it is incumbent upon managers to proactively identify and mitigate risks to their operations. The Organization recently completed the first-ever fraud and corruption risk assessment, identifying the most critical areas for immediate and sustained management attention.

Leveraging technology and innovation

140. Evolution in information and communications technology is accelerating innovation and the delivery of data for decision-making, making such technology an increasingly valued partner and enabler of the work of the Organization. A broad range of analytics tools now support strategic direction, policy formulation and

decision-making. Others, such as the computer-assisted translation tool eLuna, facilitate the work of conference services, while the electronic fuel management system supports our field missions. Umoja will enable us to produce dashboards providing real-time information on financial and programme performance of departments and offices.

141. As part of my management reform efforts, I intend to publish, soon after the appropriate Umoja extensions are in place, comprehensive, real-time and easily accessible transaction-level information about United Nations operations relating to the Sustainable Development Goals, using the standards established by the International Aid Transparency Initiative, which aims to make all information about spending easily accessible. This will increase transparency and allow Member States and the public at large to access and assess information.

Making our budgets a tool for greater accountability

142. In response to my management reform proposals, the General Assembly in December 2017 approved one of the most significant changes in the programme planning and budgetary processes of the Organization since the 1970s. Starting from 2020, the Secretariat will move towards an annual programme budget document, replacing the current two-year cycle with an annual cycle. Member States, for the first time ever, will be able to access information on programme planning, programme performance, evaluation results and financial requirements in one document. The General Assembly will be able to consider the information at one session instead of several different sessions held over a three-year period. Our budget document will now become a tool for accountability to enable us to better assess the performance of our programmes and how our resources support programme delivery.

Duty of care

143. The United Nations continues its commitment to the duty of care for its people. With the leadership of the Secretariat, more than 50 United Nations entities are operating under one security management umbrella. This strategy provides system-wide security policies, multidimensional operational approaches, security threat information, security training and crisis preparedness to ensure the safe delivery of United Nations operations and programmes.

144. The Organization is also committed to providing the necessary psychosocial and health-related support to all staff. We have promulgated a United Nations workplace mental health and well-being strategy and have implemented duty station health risk assessments and standards for the safety and quality of health care delivered in United Nations facilities.

145. United Nations personnel work in increasingly challenging and dangerous situations. Protecting them is my top priority and I have enacted these reforms to strengthen the capacity of the Organization to meet that goal while carrying out the mandates enshrined in the Charter.

Chapter IV
Conclusion

146. This report offers an overview of today's global challenges and the opportunities for progress that are made possible through multilateral dialogue and a rule-based international order.

147. As we look to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, in 2020, we must continue to innovate as ongoing events and problems shift beneath our feet. The interwoven and all-encompassing Sustainable Development Goals, diligently crafted by Member States and multiple stakeholders and spelled out in the 2030 Agenda, are well under way. Peace, inclusive and sustainable development and human rights are intrinsically intertwined, and prevention permeates every path to success.

148. The United Nations continues to offer a platform where Member States, regional organizations and civil society can find solutions to global problems that no nation acting alone can resolve. Working together multilaterally is not optional; it is the only answer.

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